

Surplus Success...

A Dream Fulfilled

On October 7, 2000, a "hose cutting ceremony" was held as part of the grand opening of the Utah Fire Museum, located between Tooele and Grantsville at the Dessert Peak Complex. According to Museum Curator Don North, the "Jaws of Life" were used to cut the hose at the ceremony.

"Anybody can cut a ribbon," he laughed. "We had our groundbreaking the 13th of November '99. The next spring we started [building], we finished up that fall and opened up in October."

While being lead on a tour through the antique and current fire fighting equipment, stories are told about all of the different devices, how they were used and by whom, you also discover that this museum has been a dream in the making for many years. The Utah State Fireman's Association (USFA) has been gathering information and items for the museum dating back to pioneer days.

"It's been a dream of the fire service for 25-years to have a place where we can show the history of the fire departments," said USFA Secretary, Grant Palmer. "You see... Brigham Young, back in the 1851, commissioned the first fire department for Salt Lake City and [the history] evolved from there...so we have a little bit of history starting with the first department."

North and Palmer have many interesting stories to tell about the development of the fire fighting agencies, including an amusing debate in the early 1900's.

"I don't remember the year now, but they debated in a [statewide] firemen's conven-



Don North shows off an antique fire truck purchased from Surplus

tion whether it was better to have a motor driven fire truck or a horse-drawn fire truck. It actually turned into a knock down, drag-out fight about that very [issue]," Palmer said.

Other interesting items in the museum include information on the Ladies Auxiliary and all of their fund raising efforts, Flame-n'-Go's program through the Department of Corrections and a "Safe House".

The Safe House is a motor home set-up to teach children fire safety. The motor home is split into five areas of fire safety. Information on other areas of home safety include, what to do with prescription drugs and gun safety. The Safe House was provided by the State of Utah.

The museum runs, for the most part, by donation. Many of the fire trucks are on loan from area fire departments; collectors have donated others. Some of the donated trucks are in need of restoration and the Utah Valley State College is taking one truck per year as an automotive depart-

ment class project. Others private donations are used to cover the cost of paint and materials for the restoration.

Museum Curator Don North, believes that one of the reasons that they were able to open the doors of the Utah Fire Museum is the many items from the Surplus Property Program. Many of the display cases, newer and older fire fighting equipment and an antique fire truck used to fight fires in the Capitol Reef National Forest during the early 1900's were acquired through the State and Federal Surplus Property Program.

"What would we be without [surplus]? Without the cabinets we would have no displays, we would have everything on the floor," North said. "I think it's a wonderful thing that we get to recycle that stuff...and it saves us money... unreal!"

More information and a map to the museum can be found on their web site at <http://www.utahfiremuseum.com/> the map is listed under "visit us".

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